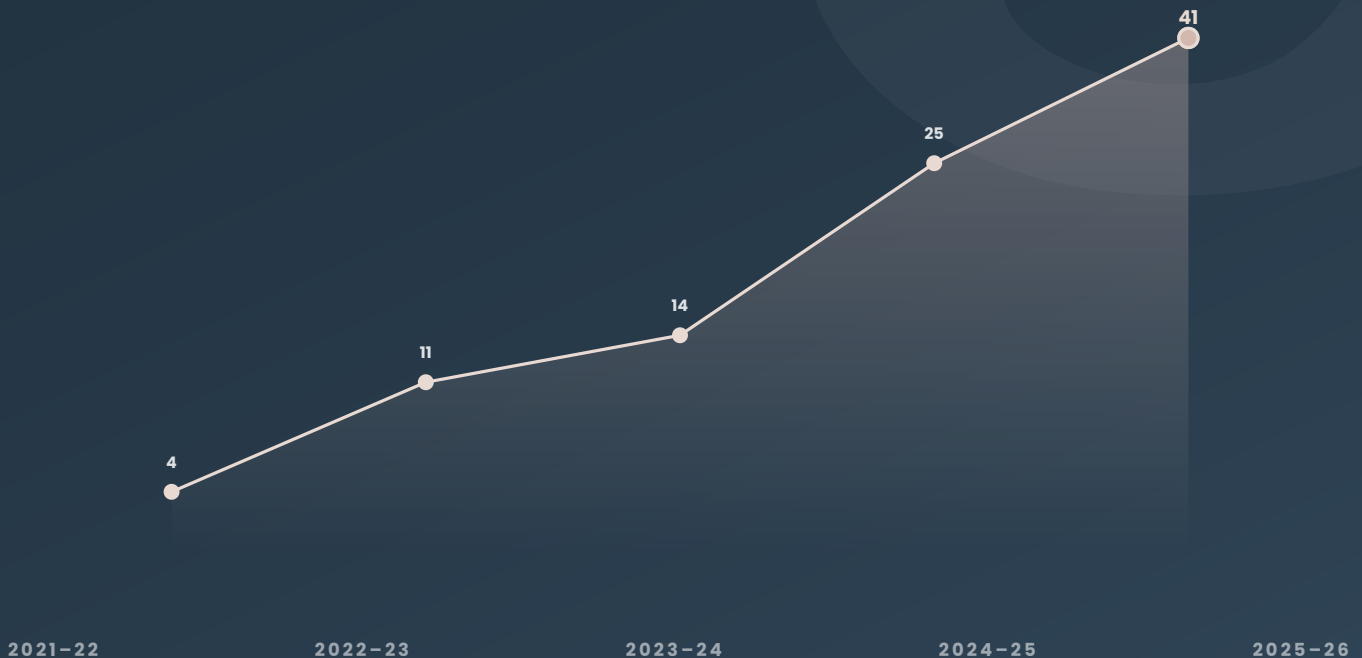


Five Years In. *Just Getting Started.*

Celebrating five years of faithful work. More schools. More services. More ways to serve the same mission. Five years in — and the best is still ahead.



To the schools we serve —

"Five years ago, we started NextEd with a simple conviction: Christian schools deserve the same level of strategic expertise, mission-driven care, and experienced leadership that the best organizations in the world receive. We had no idea how many schools would open their doors to us. We had no idea how many leaders we'd walk alongside — through searches, transitions, strategic pivots, and seasons of real difficulty. **We are humbled. We are grateful.** And we are more convinced than ever that this work matters. This year we grew — in services, in reach, in team. And what's ahead is the most exciting chapter yet."

— The NextEd Team — Gary, Jay, Kurt, Randy, Steve, and Tom

Every partner has sat in the Head of School chair.

We know what it feels like to lead a board, navigate a leadership crisis, carry a school's budget, and bear the weight of a community's trust. That's not a credential — it's the foundation of every conversation we have. Our mission is unwavering: **to ensure education bears the image of Christ.** Everything we do — every search, every plan, every coaching relationship — is anchored in that calling.



Four values that keep every partnership aligned.

Each school is unique — but the posture we bring to every one of them is the same. These four commitments have shaped every search, every plan, and every conversation since day one.



Listening

We enter every situation with a listening ear, especially with clients, as each school is unique. If we actively listen, we understand and answer well. Not once, not twice, but through the full relationship.

PROVERBS 18:13



Truth

Our team submits to the truth of Scripture, knowing that in a posture of humility and servant leadership, His will is done. We commit to speaking the truth in love with clients, because He does the same for us.

JOHN 17:17



Angles

Great solutions are a culmination of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding—the many angles that make sense of a challenge. We operate as a team in everything, burdens included. Teams that work well, produce ideas that work well.

GALATIANS 6:2



Motion

NextEd strives for excellence and the highest standard of expertise, for ourselves and school leaders. We are constantly moving forward and challenging others to find their next. (And we'll be right next to them as they do.)

PHILIPPIANS 1:9–11

OUR PURPOSE

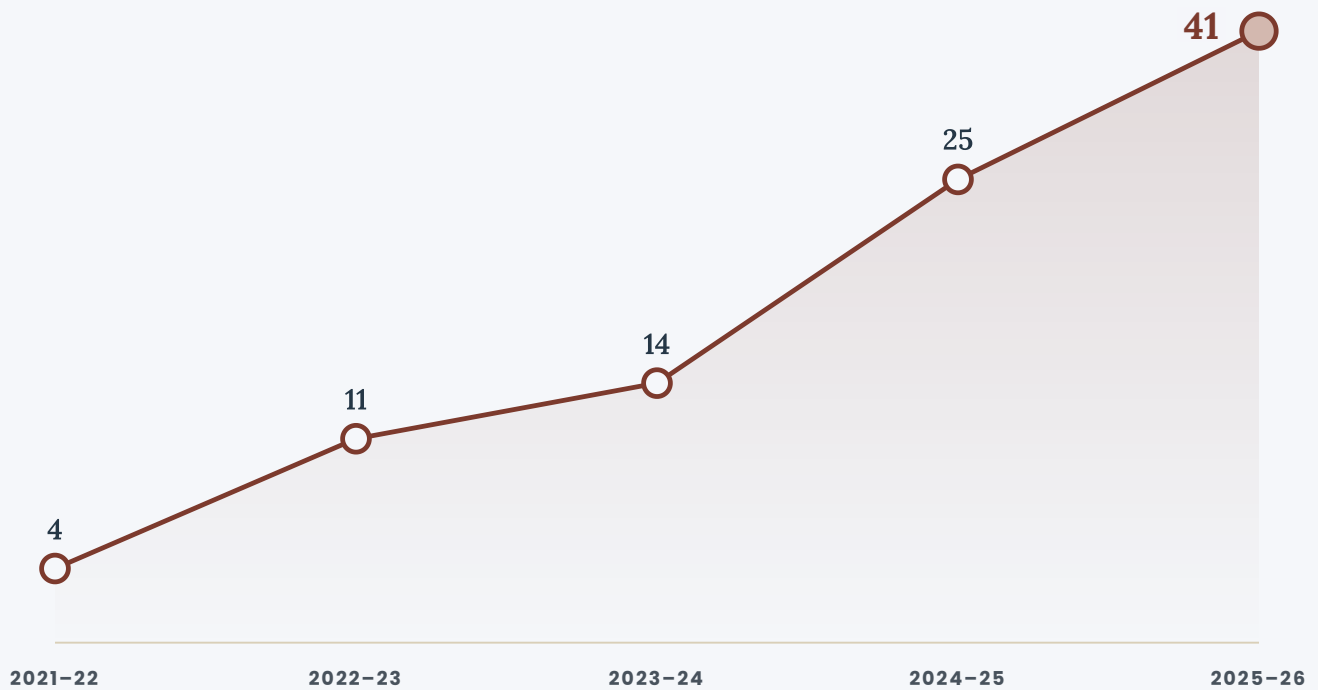
Together, we're ensuring education bears the image of Christ—by shaping exceptional leaders, strengthening school dynamics, and stewarding mission-driven governance.

The map displays the following activity levels by region:

- West:** Sacramento (3), San Jose (2), Fresno (2), Los Angeles (6), San Francisco (2), Phoenix (2), Tucson (2), Albuquerque (2), Ciudad Juárez (2).
- South:** Austin (4), San Antonio (5), Houston (5), Dallas (3), Fort Worth (3), Atlanta (5), Jacksonville (3), Orlando (3), Tampa (3).
- Midwest:** Minneapolis (3), Saint Paul (3), Milwaukee (3), Chicago (3), Detroit (3), Cleveland (3), Cincinnati (3), Indianapolis (3), Kansas City (3), Wichita (3), Tulsa (3), Memphis (3), St. Louis (3).
- Northeast:** Boston (3), New York City (5), Philadelphia (4), Washington (4), Baltimore (4), Raleigh (4), Charlotte (4), Atlanta (4), Jacksonville (4), Orlando (4), Tampa (4).
- Other:** Portland (3), Boise (3), Salt Lake City (3), Denver (8), Lincoln (2), Kansas (2), Missouri (2), Illinois (2), Indiana (2), Ohio (2), Pennsylvania (2), New Jersey (2), Maryland (2), Virginia (2), North Carolina (2), South Carolina (2), Georgia (2), Florida (2).

PAGE 04

The five-year climb.



What began as a single startup engagement in Colorado has grown into a national practice. Year over year, the number of schools choosing to partner with NextEd has climbed steadily — not through aggressive expansion, but through word of mouth between boards and heads who trust one another.

10.25x

Growth in schools served annually since our first year — from **4 schools** in 2021-22 to **41 schools** in 2025-26, with more repeat partnerships than new ones in most years.

Five years in, six voices.

We asked each partner what stands out, looking back on five years of walking alongside Christian school boards and leaders.

“

When NextEd was a concept, I underestimated the personal and professional reward of working closely with school board members to discern their next school leader, clarify their next strategic move, and to hone their effectiveness as owners of the mission. Now, five years in, it's a joy to look back and see the growth and maturity that has resulted from our partnership with dozens of school boards. When boards invite us back for additional coaching or a fresh project, it validates our hope that we are true partners in the co-mission of leading up in the name of Jesus.



Gary Arnold
PARTNER

“

I know what it feels like to be all alone as a head of school and to feel like you have to figure it all out for yourself. It's a terrible feeling, and discovering networks and mentors who taught me the nuances of the head of school position was transformational. I don't want this next generation of leaders to feel that way, and I've prayed that the Lord will allow me, and us collectively, to be part of the answer for them. I've seen the Lord empower and equip leaders through our work at NextEd, and it's become one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my life. Paradoxically, even when counseling and coaching has led to heads of school finding other areas inside and outside of Christian education where they will serve, it's been rewarding. To find God's plan and purpose for people and for schools is an honor and a privilege I never thought I'd have, and something for which I'm intensely grateful. To be a head is to impact a community; to mentor heads is to impact a generation.



Jay Ferguson
PARTNER

“

Five years in, what stands out to me most is the trust schools have placed in us during some of their most important moments. Whether helping a board navigate governance challenges, guiding a leadership transition, or facilitating a vision for the future of an existing school or a new school startup, I've seen firsthand how healthy leadership can transform an institution. These experiences have strengthened my belief that Christian schools need both wise strategy and courageous leadership to flourish. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve this mission alongside remarkable colleagues and school leaders across the country.



Kurt Unruh
PARTNER

“

Through every year of my involvement in Christian education, I have grown ever more hopeful about its future. I believe we enjoy His favor upon what we all do for the Kingdom. While my commitment has moved from direct headship to working with many schools all over this country, my passion and hope have not changed. I am deeply impressed with what teachers, coaches, innovators, and school leaders are doing in their towns and cities to make student learning exciting and engaging for students. My partners were friends five plus years ago and have now become family. Together, we care passionately about what schools can, should, and will do for dedicated staff, Christian families, and budding students. NextEd has been so valuable in allowing me to continue to serve Him in my favorite passion: High-quality and engaging Christian education.



Randy Brunk
PARTNER

“

I'm the product of Christian schools and have served in them throughout my career. I care deeply about the movement, especially enhancing school excellence and expanding the number of students served. I care deeply because Jesus does. My personal calling is rooted in this motto: Empowering Others. Exploring Frontiers. Working with an amazing team, NextEd has provided me the opportunity to act purposefully on these convictions. NextEd was founded with entrepreneurial startup energy – innovation and creativity. It's a great joy to bring that same spirit to the schools we serve.



Steve O'Neil
PARTNER

“

As a young Christian school leader, I benefited from the counsel of veteran leaders. I had always prayed that at some point God would leverage my desire to help grow the Christian school industry in partnership with other experienced, like-minded individuals to do the same. I knew that our wisdom multiplied would provide real, difference-making counsel and services for Christian school leaders. I am so grateful for the blessings God has provided to the schools NextEd has been able to serve these first five years, and I am eager to see how God will use us going forward.



Tom Konjoyan
PARTNER

Another year of meaningful impact.

In 2025–26, we served 41 schools through six service areas. Each number below represents a school community, a leader, a board, or a plan now better aligned with its mission.



2025–26 BY THE NUMBERS

41

SCHOOLS SERVED ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN 2025–26 — OUR LARGEST YEAR YET, AND MORE THAN EIGHT TIMES OUR FIRST YEAR.



14

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCHES



12

LEADERSHIP SEARCHES



4

STRATEGIC PLANS



4

COACHING RELATIONSHIPS



4

BOARD RETREATS



3

SCHOOL START-UPS

Schools we were honored to serve.

One shared mission, dozens of school communities we were honored to serve this year.

- 30A Classical Academy
- Allen Academy
- Alpine Christian
- Ambleside School
- American Classical Academy Rutherford
- Augusta Christian Schools
- Banks Academy
- Bay Area Christian School
- Brentwood Academy
- Briarwood Christian School
- Cascade Christian Schools
- Central Minnesota
- Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy
- Coastal Christian School
- Delmarva Christian School
- Des Moines Christian School
- First Presbyterian Day School
- Foothill Christian School
- Fort Bend Christian Academy
- Gilbert Christian Schools
- Grace Community School
- Greater Atlanta Christian School
- Hill Country Christian School
- Hyde Park Schools
- Layton Christian Academy
- Lee-Scott Academy
- Lenawee Christian Ministries
- Lighthouse Christian School
- Naples Christian Academy
- Oakbrook Preparatory School
- Pella Christian Schools
- San Antonio Christian School
- Savannah Christian Preparatory School
- Southwest Christian School
- Steamboat Christian Academy
- The Woodlands Christian Academy
- Trinity Christian Academy
- United Christian Academy
- Vail Christian High School
- Village Christian School
- Wilmington Christian School



The work, up close.

Behind every number is a story. Here are a few from this year.

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH



ALLEN ACADEMY

ALLEN ACADEMY

From One of Our First Clients to Trusted Partner — Allen Academy's Second Search

After a leadership departure left Allen Academy at a crossroads, they turned to a familiar partner. Allen was NextEd's very first search client — and two years later, when their Head of School took a new opportunity, they came back.

NextEd conducted a full retained executive search at the oldest accredited independent prep school in Texas, running stakeholder surveys across staff, board, and parents to define exactly what the school needed, building a custom evaluation rubric, and sourcing a competitive national candidate pool. The search produced both a strong internal finalist and a competitive external slate, giving the board a clear, evidence-based path to a decision rather than a leap of faith.

LEADERSHIP SEARCH



SAN ANTONIO
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

SAN ANTONIO CHRISTIAN

When Culture Starts in the Middle School, the Hire Has to Be Right

San Antonio Christian School needed a Middle School Principal who could set the spiritual and academic tone for a thriving, non-denominational Christian school of 1,000 students — someone who could shepherd faculty, disciple students, and partner closely with senior leadership, all while embodying the school's "Heart of a Lion" values. NextEd ran a search, built a full Opportunity Profile, and sourced a national candidate pool matched against SACS's specific mission, culture, and leadership expectations. Within two months from the launch date, the school leader was placed successfully — and SACS trusted NextEd enough to bring them back immediately for a second engagement.

STRATEGIC PLANNING



LIGHTHOUSE CHRISTIAN

Building Alignment for the Next Chapter

Lighthouse Christian School entered the strategic planning process from a position of strength—a deeply rooted mission, a thriving school community, and exciting opportunities for future growth. As the Board considered significant decisions around governance, enrollment, facilities, and potential expansion, they recognized the importance of achieving greater alignment before determining the school's next chapter. NextEd guided Lighthouse through a two-phase strategic planning process that included board interviews, stakeholder surveys, leadership discussions, and facilitated planning sessions. Together, we translated those insights into a clear seven-goal strategic plan with defined priorities, ownership, sequencing, and a practical decision-making framework that equips the Board and leadership team to move forward with clarity and confidence.

"Because of the compressed timeline, we were a bit apprehensive that the process could be completed with quality. Without the steady hand, experience, and faithful support that NextEd provided, I'm not sure we would have made it. Now that we've approved the plan and are ready to begin implementation, I'm excited to see where God takes our school and truly appreciative that He led us to NextEd for this foundational part of the process." — LCS, Board Chair

Searching further — beyond the Head of School.

A school rises and falls on the quality of its leadership — and that goes far beyond the Head of School chair. Athletic directors, principals, advancement directors, operations leaders — these roles shape culture, drive mission, and determine whether a school thrives or stalls. NextEd has always believed this. And in 2025–26, we did something about it.

This year, we expanded our search services beyond executive placement to include a broader range of leadership roles across the school. Same process. Same discernment. Same relational approach that has defined our work from the beginning — now reaching further into the org chart to help schools build leadership teams that are truly aligned with their mission.

12

We were honored to serve 12 schools through expanded search services in 2025–26. Through these engagements, we refined our process, deepened our talent pool, and grew in confidence — and we're just getting started.

ROLES WE CAN NOW HELP YOU FILL

Director of Development

Athletic Director

Director of Human Resources

Division Principals

Director of Advancement

Chief Financial Officer

and more



The people behind the work.

Six partners. Hundreds of years of combined Christian school leadership experience. One shared mission. Every NextEd partner is a current or former Head of School.



Jay

Steve

Kurt

Randy

Gary

Tom

Gary Arnold · PARTNER

Gary has served as Head of School in Massachusetts, the greater Chicago area, and Little Rock, Arkansas — where he spent 16 years helping transform Little Rock Christian Academy's reach and impact. A bridge-builder rooted in biblical conviction, he brings decades of leadership wisdom and relational depth to every school he serves.

Randy Brunk · PARTNER

A builder at heart, Randy has served as Head of School at both Peoria Christian School and Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, guiding growth through strategic planning and organizational development. He excels at helping schools get honest about where they are — and building a clear, achievable roadmap for what's next.

Jay Ferguson · PARTNER

A former litigation attorney turned Head of School, Jay brings legal insight, pastoral care, and a strategist's mind to every engagement. He currently leads Grace Community School in Tyler, Texas — growing it from a small institution into a nationally respected school. Jay is known for guiding boards and leaders through complex challenges with calm, principle-driven clarity.

Tom Konjoyan · PARTNER

A founding team member at Oaks Christian School and current Head of School at Village Christian Schools in Los Angeles, Tom brings decades of hands-on experience in school leadership, strategic planning, and resource development. As a former collegiate athlete, he leads with discipline, vision, and a deep commitment to building thriving school communities.

Steve O'Neil · PARTNER

Growing up in New York and Florida and having led Christian schools in the Southeast, Midwest, West, and East Africa, Steve has developed deep knowledge and experience in talent selection and development, as well as school culture. He's passionate about school excellence and helping leaders and boards identify opportunities and chart a course to achieve exceptional results.

Kurt Unruh · PARTNER

An attorney-turned-educator, Kurt founded Valor Christian High School and grew it to over 1,200 students. His rare combination of legal acumen, entrepreneurial instinct, and passion for Christ-centered education makes him uniquely equipped to help schools innovate, sustain, and expand their mission.

We're not just growing services. We're growing our team.

As NextEd grows, so does the team behind the work. This year we welcomed two new staff members helping us serve schools with greater excellence and capacity.



Talin Unruh

TALENT ACQUISITION MANAGER

Talin helps lead NextEd's efforts to identify, recruit, and place qualified candidates in schools and organizations. He works closely with clients to understand their needs and supports candidates throughout the search process, helping ensure strong and lasting placements.



Tinly Shelnutt

BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER

Tinly helps keep NextEd running by managing projects, supporting client communication, and developing documents and resources for the team. A product of Christian schools herself, she brings a personal passion for the mission alongside a sharp eye for writing, coordination, and administration.

Two new ways we're serving schools.

NOW AVAILABLE

NextEd Discovery

Two of our signature services, Search and Strategic Planning, begin with a phase we call Discovery & Definition. It is our thorough review of the school that allows us to best understand school strengths, gaps, and opportunities. Our process reveals deep learning that is essential in these other services but can be helpful to a school at any time.

That's exactly what NextEd Discovery is.

Every school has amazing strengths worthy of galvanizing. Every school also has blind spots; not because of bad leadership – but because it's nearly impossible to see your own institution clearly from the inside. The best ideas for improvement often come from a fresh set of eyes, asking the right questions of the right people.

Through NextEd Discovery, we listen and look closely – gathering insight through surveys, focus groups, and candid stakeholder conversations, reviewing your key documents, and applying proven metrics to evaluate your school's health across the areas that matter most: leadership and governance, financial sustainability, enrollment, program quality, culture, and mission alignment. Each area is assessed and scored, giving you an objective, at-a-glance picture of where your school is thriving and where it's quietly vulnerable. What you receive is an honest, comprehensive read of your institution – the strengths worth building on, the gaps worth addressing, and the opportunities worth pursuing – paired with clear, prioritized recommendations and a practical roadmap for the road ahead.

NextEd Discovery is designed to give your board and leadership a shared, trustworthy starting point: the kind of clarity that's nearly impossible to reach from the inside, and the confidence to act on it.

IN DEVELOPMENT

NextEd Legal

The legal landscape for Christian schools is getting more complex. NextEd is responding.

Religious liberty. Employment law. Governance policy. Mission protection. The legal challenges facing Christian schools have never been more urgent – or more consequential. And for too long, schools have navigated them without counsel that truly understands their mission-driven context.

NextEd is working to change that.

We are currently licensed to practice law in Colorado and Texas, and seeking to build a trusted network of mission-aligned attorneys across the country – so that wherever your school is, we can connect you with counsel that gets it.

Beyond legal representation, we're developing resources, tools, and consulting services to help schools understand their legal landscape, strengthen their policies, and protect their mission before problems arise.

This is just the beginning. NextEd Legal is a developing initiative, and we're building it the right way: carefully, faithfully, and with the same commitment to excellence that defines everything we do.

LET'S TALK

Is your school ready for what's next?

Whether you're navigating a leadership transition, building a strategic plan, strengthening your board, or simply trying to find your footing — we'd be honored to walk alongside you.

Five years in, we are more grateful, more energized, and more committed than ever to the schools and leaders we get to serve.

Get in touch

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